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## Got a questions

Answer The Parable of the Prodigal Son is found in Luke 15:11-32. The character of the forgiving father, who remains constant throughout the story, is a picture of God. In telling the story, Jesus identifies Himself with God in His loving attitude toward the lost, symbolized by the younger son (the tax collectors and sinners of Luke 15:1). The elder brother represents the self-righteous (the Pharisees and teachers of the law of Luke 15:2). The major theme of this parable is not so much the conversion of the sinner, as in the previous two parables of Luke 15, but rather the restoration of a believer into fellowship with the Father. In the first two parables, the owner went out to look for what was lost (Luke 15:1-10), whereas in this story the father waits and watches eagerly for his son's return. We see a progression through the three parables from the relationship of one in a hundred (Luke 15:1-7), to one in ten (Luke 15:8-10), to one in one (Luke 15:11-32), demonstrating God's love for each individual and His personal attentiveness toward all humanity. We see in this story the graciousness of the father overshadowing the sinfulness of the son, as it is the memory of the father's goodness that brings the prodigal son to repentance (Romans 2:4). Jesus sets the scene for the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11: "There was a man who had two sons." The Younger Son In Luke 15:12, the younger son asks his father for his share of his estate, which would have been half of what his older brother would receive (see Deuteronomy 21:17). In other words, the younger son asked for 1/3 of the estate. Though it was perfectly within his rights to ask, it was not a loving thing to do, as it implied that he wished his father dead. Instead of rebuking his son, the father patiently grants him his request. This is a picture of God letting a sinner go his own way (Deuteronomy 30:19). Like the prodigal son, we all possess a foolish ambition to be independent, which is at the root of the sinner persisting in his sin (Genesis 3:6; Romans 1:28). A sinful state is a departure and distance from God (Romans 1:21). A sinful state is also a place of constant discontent. In Luke 12:15 Jesus says, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." The younger son in the parable learned the hard way that covetousness leads to a life of dissatisfaction and disappointment. He also learned that the most valuable things in life are the things we cannot buy or replace. In Luke 15:13 the younger son travels to a distant country. It is evident from his previous actions that he had already made that journey in his heart, and the physical departure was a display of his willful disobedience to all the goodness his father had offered (Proverbs 27:19; Matthew 6:21; 12:34). In the foreign land, the prodigal squanders all his inheritance on selfish, shallow fulfillment, losing everything. His financial disaster is followed by a natural disaster in the form of a famine, which he failed to plan for. At this point he hires himself out to a Gentile and finds himself feeding pigs, a detestable job to the Jewish people (Leviticus 11:7). Needless to say, the prodigal must have been incredibly desperate to willingly take such a loathsome position. He was paid so little and grew so hungry that he longed to eat the pig's food. To top it off, he could find no mercy among the people he had chosen as his own: "No one gave him anything" (verse 16). Apparently, once his wealth was gone, so were his friends. Even the unclean animals were better off than he was at that point. The prodigal son tolling in the pig pen is a picture of the lost sinner or a rebellious Christian who has returned to a life of sin (2 Peter 2:19-21). The results of sin are never pretty (James 1:14-15). The prodigal son begins to reflect on his miserable condition, and "he came to his senses" (Luke 15:17). He realizes that even his father's servants have it better. His painful circumstances help him to see his father in a new light. Hope begins to dawn in his heart (Psalm 147:11; Isaiah 40:30-31; 1 Timothy 4:10). The prodigal's realization is reflective of the sinner's discovery that, apart from God, there is no hope (Ephesians 2:12; 2 Timothy 2:25-26). When a sinner "comes to his senses," repentance follows, along with a longing to return to fellowship with God. The son devises a plan of action, and it shows that his repentance was genuine. He will admit his sin (Luke 15:18), and he will give up his rights as a son and take on the position of a servant (verse 19). He realizes he has no right to a blessing from his father, and he has nothing to offer his father except a life of service. Returning home, the prodigal son is prepared to fall at his father's feet and beg for mercy. In the same way, a repentant sinner coming to God is keenly aware of his own spiritual poverty. Laying aside all pride and feelings of entitlement, he brings nothing of value with him. The sinner's only thought is to cast himself at the mercy of God and beg for a position of servitude (1 John 1:9; Romans 6:6-18; 12:1). The Father The father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son was waiting for his son to return. In fact, "while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him" (Luke 15:20). He runs to his wayward son, embraces him, and kisses him. In Jesus' day, it was not customary for a grown man to run, yet the father runs to greet his son, breaking convention in his love and desire for restoration (verse 20). The returning son begins his prepared speech (verse 21), but his father cuts him off and begins issuing commands to honor his son—the best robe, the best ring, the best feast! The father does not question his son or lecture him; instead, he joyfully forgives him and receives him back into fellowship. What a picture of God's love, condescension, and grace! God's heart is full of compassion for His children; He stands ready to welcome the returning sinner back home with joyous celebration. The prodigal son was satisfied to return home as a slave, but to his surprise and delight he is restored back into the full privilege of being his father's son. The weary, gaunt, filthy sinner who trudged home was transformed into the guest of honor in a rich man's home. That is what God's grace does for a penitent sinner (Psalm 40:2; 103:4). Not only are we forgiven in Christ, but we receive the Spirit of "adoption to sonship" (Romans 8:15). We are His children, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). The father's command to bring the best robe for the returned son is a sign of dignity and honor, proof of the prodigal's acceptance back into the family. The ring for the son's hand is a sign of authority and sonship. The sandals for his feet are a sign of his not being a servant, as servants did not wear shoes. The father orders the fattened calf to be prepared, and a party is held in honor of the returned son. Fatted calves in those times were saved for special occasions. This was not just any party; it was a rare and complete celebration. All these things represent what we receive in Christ upon salvation: the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness (Isaiah 61:10), the privilege of partaking of the Spirit of adoption (Ephesians 1:5), and feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, prepared to walk in the ways of holiness (Ephesians 6:15). The actions of the father in the parable show us that "the Lord does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him" (Psalm 103:10-13). Instead of condemnation, there is rejoicing for a son who "was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:32; cf. Romans 8:1; John 5:24). Those words—dead and alive, lost and found—are terms that also apply to one's state before and after conversion to Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5). The feast is a picture of what occurs in heaven over one repentant sinner (Luke 15:7, 10). The Older Son The final, tragic character in the Parable of the Prodigal Son is the older son. As the older son comes in from the field, he hears music and dancing. He finds out from one of the servants that his younger brother has come home and that what he hears is the sound of jubilation over his brother's safe return. The older brother becomes angry and refuses to go into the house. His father goes to his older son and pleads with him to come in. "But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'" (Luke 15:29-30). The father answers gently: "My son, . . . you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad" (verses 31-32). The older son's words and actions reveal several things about him: 1) His relationship with his father was based on works and merit. He points out to his father that he has always been obedient as he's been "slaving away"; thus, he deserves a party—he has earned it. 2) He despises his younger brother as undeserving of the father's favor. 3) He does not understand grace and has no room for forgiveness. In fact, the demonstration of grace toward his brother makes him angry. His brother does not deserve a party. 4) He has disowned the prodigal as a brother, referring to him as "this son of yours" (verse 30). 5) He thinks his father is stingy and unfair: "You never gave me even a young goat" (verse 29). The father's words are corrective in several ways: 1) His older son should know that their relationship is not based on performance: "My son, . . . you are always with me, and everything I have is yours" (Luke 15:31). 2) His older son should accept his brother as part of the family. The father refers to the prodigal as "his brother of yours" (verse 32). 3) His older son could have enjoyed a party any time he wanted, but he never utilized the blessings at his disposal. 4) Grace is necessary and appropriate: "We had to celebrate" (verse 32). The Pharisees and the teachers of the law, mentioned in Luke 15:1, are portrayed as the older brother in the parable. Outwardly, they lived blameless lives, but inwardly their attitudes were abominable (Matthew 23:25-28). They saw their relationship with God as based on their performance, and they considered themselves deserving of God's favor—unlike the undeserving sinners around them. They did not understand grace and were, in fact, angered by it. They had no room for forgiveness. They saw no kinship between sinners and themselves. They viewed God as rather stingy in His blessings. And they considered that, if God were to accept tax collectors and sinners into His family, then God would be unfair. The older brother's focus was on himself and his own service; as a result, he had no joy in his brother's arrival home. He was so consumed with justice and equity (as he saw them) that he failed to see the value of his brother's repentance and return. The older brother had allowed bitterness to take root in his heart to the point that he was unable to show compassion toward his brother. The bitterness spilled over into other relationships, too, and he was unable to forgive the perceived sin of his father against him. Rather than enjoy fellowship with his father, brother, and community, the older brother stayed outside the house and nursed his anger. How sad to choose misery and isolation over restoration and reconciliation! The older brother—and the religious leaders of Jesus' day—failed to realize that "anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him" (1 John 2:9-11). The Parable of the Prodigal Son is one of Scripture's most beautiful pictures of God's grace. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We are all prodigals in that we have run from God, selfishly squandered our resources, and, to some degree, wallowed in sin. But God is ready to forgive. He will save the contrite, not by works but by His grace, through faith (Ephesians 2:9; Romans 9:16; Psalm 51:5). That is the core message of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. 3 reviews are not recommendedGot Questions has a rating of 3 stars from 68 reviews, indicating that most customers are generally dissatisfied with their purchases. Reviewers dissatisfied with Got Questions most frequently mention and holy spirit. Got Questions ranks 4th among Christian sites.This company does not typically respond to reviews Got Eternal Life? What is the way of salvation? What is the plan of salvation? Is Jesus the Only Way of Salvation? What is a Christian? What does it mean to be a born again Christian? Is there Life after Death? How do I receive Forgiveness from God? What is the Romans Road to Salvation? What is the Sinner's Prayer? 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I am Jewish, can I become a Christian? I am a Muslim, why should I consider becoming a Christian? I am a Hindu, why should I consider becoming a Christian? I am a Jehovah's Witness. Why should I consider becoming a Christian? I am a Mormon, why should I consider becoming a Christian? I am an atheist. Why should I consider becoming a Christian? "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." Hebrews 6:1-2 Question Answer: "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12) is the second of seven "I AM" declarations of Jesus, recorded only in John's gospel, that point to His unique divine identity and purpose. In declaring Himself to be the Light of the world, Jesus was claiming that He is the exclusive source of spiritual light. No other source of spiritual truth is available to mankind. There are two types of light in the world. We can perceive one, or both, or neither! When we are born into this world, we perceive physical light, and by it we learn of our Creator's handiwork in the things we see. However, although that light is good, there is another Light, a Light so important that the Son of God had to come in order to both declare and impart it to men. John 8:12 records, "When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, 'I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but have the light of life.'" The metaphor used by the Lord in this verse speaks of the light of His Truth, the light of His Word, the light of eternal Life. Those who perceive the true Light will never walk in spiritual darkness. We take a candle into a room to dispel the darkness. Likewise, the Light of Jesus Christ has to be taken into the darkness of sin that engulfs the hearts and lives of those who are not following Him. That's the condition behind having this Light—that we follow Him. If we do not follow Him, we will not have this light, this truth, this eternal life. Physical light is necessary for physical life. The earth would certainly change very rapidly if there were no longer any sunlight. A forest full of trees with very thick canopies of foliage high above has very little plant life on the ground except for moss or lichen, which needs little sunlight. Plants will never move away from the light—they are said to be positively phototropic, drawn to the light. In the same way, spiritual light is necessary for spiritual life, and this can be a good test of our standing in Christ. The believer will always tend toward spiritual things; he will always tend toward fellowship, prayer, the Word of God, and so on. The unbeliever always does the opposite (John 1:5; 3:19-20) because light exposes his evil, and he hates the light. Indeed, no man can come into the true spiritual light of Jesus Christ, unless he is enabled (John 6:37). Following Jesus is the condition of two promises in John 8:12. First, His followers will never walk in darkness, which is a reference to the assurance of salvation we enjoy. As true followers of the Light, we will never follow the ways of sin, never live in a state of continually sinning (1 John 1:5-7). Rather, we repent of our sin in order to stay close to the Light of the world. The second promise is that we will reflect the Light of Life. Just as He came as the Light of the world, He commands us to be "lights," too. In Matthew 5:14-16 we see believers depicted as the light of the world. Just as the moon has no light of its own, reflecting the light of the sun, so are believers to reflect the Light of Christ so that all can see it in us. The Light is evident to others by the good deeds we do in faith and through the power of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis here is maintaining a credible and obvious witness in the world, a witness that shows us to be faithful, God-honoring, trustworthy, sincere, earnest, and honest in all that we do. Also, we should always be ready to give an account of the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15), for the gospel Light we have is not to be covered, but made obvious for all to see and benefit from, that they, too, may leave the darkness and come into the Light. Return to: Questions about John What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the Light of the World" (John 8:12)? To subscribe to our Question of the Week, please enter your email address below and click subscribe. 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